

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L MADRID 2347

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, SP, NATO

SUBJECT: PRIME MINISTER ARIAS MEETS WITH U.S. SENATORS

SUMMARY: IN ONE HOUR CONVERSATION WITH SEN HUGH SCOTT AND 5 OTHER U.S. SEANTORS, PRIME MIN ARIAS REAFFIRMED SPAIN'S DESIRE FOR CLOSER ASSOCIATION WITH NATO, THOUGH HE DENIED THAT SPAIN IS SEEK-ING MEMBERSHIP. HE WAS US-SPANISH RELATIONS AS CORDIAL AND COOP-ERATIVE AND WAS CONFIDENT CURRENT BASE TALKS WOULD HAVE SATIS-FACTORY OUTCOME. HE FELT THAT HIS POLITICAL REFORM PROGRAM HAD MADE NOTABLE PROGRESS, REAFFIRMING THAT POLITICAL ASSOCIATIONS OPEN TO ALL SPANIARDS EXCEPT THOSE WHO PRACTICE VIOLENCE AND VIOLATE CONSTITUTION. WHILE REITERATING THAT POLITICAL REFORMS WOULD PROCEED PRUDENTLY, LEST SPAIN FALL INTO PORTUGUESE-TYPE SITUATION, ARIAS SAID THAT PORTUGAL'S EXPERIENCE HAS HAD LITTLE EFFECT ON SPAIN'S INTERNAL POLITICAL SCENE BECAUSE OF DIFFERENT CIRCUMSTANCES IN TWO COUNTRIES. ARIAS WAS CONFIDENT THAT CAREFULLY PREPARED SUCCESSION MACHINERY WOULD PRECLUDE DISORDERS IN TRANSITION AND SAID THAT CHANGE-OVER AFTERIE ANCO WOULD PRODUCE NO CHANGE IN SPANISH POLICY. END SUMMARY.

1. SEN HUGH SCOTT ACCOMPANIED BY SENS HOLLINGS, MORGAN, CULVER, LEAHY, AND WILLIAM L. SCOTT, CALLED ON PRIME MIN ARIAS NAVARRO MORNING OF APR 7. THE AMB ACCOMPANIED PARTY AND INTRODUCED THEM
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TO PRIME MIN. AFTER OPENING GREETINGS BY SENATOR SCOTT, EXPRESSIONS

OF GROUP'S THANKS FOR OPPORTUNITY TO VISIT, AND REITERATION OF IMPORTANCE OF US-SPANISH TIES; PRIME MIN REPLIED THAT US LEADERSHIP ROLE IN WORLD IMPOSED PARTICULARLY HEAVY RESPONSIBILITIES AND DIFFICULTIES ON US SENATE AT THIS TIME. ARIAS SAID UNDERLYING CORDIALITY IN PRESENT RELATIONSHIP WITH US MAKE IT POSSIBLE FOR ALL PENDING BILATERAL ISSUES TO BE DEALT WITH IN COOPERATIVE SPIRIT. ARIAS SAID CURRENT BASE TALKS ARE PROCEEDING IN SAME CORDIAL ATMOSPHERE AND HE EXPECTED SATISFACTORY OUTCOME. ARIAS VOICED CONVICTION US CONTINUES TO NEED CLOSE COLLABORATION OF EUROPE AND WAS CONFIDENT THAT US WOULD TAKE INTO ACCOUNT SPAIN'S CONTINUING NEED FOR COLLABORATION OF US IN ITS OWN DEFENSE EFFORTS.

2. SEN HOLLINGS COMMENTED THAT GROUP APPRECIATED SPAIN'S WILLINGNESS TO CONTRIBUTE TO WESTERN DEFENSE, BUT WAS ALSO AWARE THAT SPAIN NOW CONSIDERING IN CURRENT BASE TALKS CUTTING ITS CONTRIBUTION. HOLLINGS ADDED THAT US HAS ALWAYS FAVORED NATO ROLE FOR SPAIN, BUT WONDERED HOW US COULD DEMONSTRATE SPAIN'S IMPORTANCE TO NATO IF SPAIN CUTS BACK ITS CONTRIBUTION.

3. ARIAS REPLIED THAT REDUCTION OPTION, WHICH WAS ONLY ONE POSSIBLE SOLUTION, GREW OUT OF IMBALANCE BETWEEN SPAIN'S COMMITMENTS AND ITS RESOURCES. THIS IMBALANCE GIVEN IMMEDIACY BY DEVELOPMENTS IN PORTUGAL WHICH REQUIRE SPECIAL MEASURES TO PREVENT SPREAD OF INFECTION ACROSS THE BORDER AND TO CONTAIN COMMUNISM. VIEWS OF TWO SIDES, ARIAS ADDED, HAVE COME CLOSER TOGETHER IN LATEST SESSION OF TALKS, WHICH GIVES US REASON TO EXPECT RIGHT OUTCOME FOR BOTH SIDES CAN BE FOUND.

4. SEN MORGAN SAID SPAIN SAW IT AS IMPERATIVE THAT BOTH COUNTRIES CONTINUE THEIR GOOD RELATIONSHIP AND THAT SOME SORT OF LINK WITH NATO BE FOUND. ARIAS CONSIDERED CLOSE US-SPANISH RELATIONSHIP TO BE BASED ON PERMANENT FACTORS AND NOT TRANSISTORY CONSIDERATIONS. BUT SPAIN FOUND IT HARD TO UNDERSTAND WHY IT WAS EXCLUDED FROM NATO. IT IS NOT ASKING FOR NATO MEMBERSHIP NOW, HE NOTED, BUT IT IS DIFFICULT TO HAVE COMPLETE AND COHERENT DEFENSE IF SPAIN IS EXCLUDED. ARIAS UNDERSTOOD THAT IN LAST ROUND OF TALKS US DELEGATES HAD INDICATED UNDERSTANDING OF SPAIN'S CONCERN AND HAD SHOWN WILLINGNESS TO SEEK SOLUTION.

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5. ARIAS SAW MORE AFFINITY BETWEEN US AND SPAIN ON BASIC PRINCIPLES THAT WAS GENERALLY REALIZED. HE WARNED SENATORS AGAINST ACCEPTANCE OF FALSE IMAGE OF SPAIN, WHICH HE NOTED HAD SUFFERED CONSEQUENCES OF BITTER CIVIL WAR AND WHICH HAD BEEN FORCED TO TAKE SPECIAL MEASURES IN RECONSTRUCTION PROCESS. UNDER FRANCO SPAIN HAS OVERCOME THAT TRAGIC SITUATION, IMPROVED CONDITIONS, AND IS MOVING TOWARD GREATER PLURALISM AND PARTICIPATION. ARIAS REITERATED HIS GOVERNMENT SEEKS TO FOSTER DEMOCRATIC PRACTICES

AND OPEN CHANNELS OF PARTICIPATION-- BUT WITH PRUDENCE SO AS NOT TO FALL IN SAME ERRORS AS PORTUGAL. HE RECALLED SPAIN'S PROVERB THAT "ONE MUST CLIMB AND DESCEND MOUNTAIN SLOWLY TO AVOID FALLING".

6. SEN CULVER INQUIRED WHETHER ARIAS WAS SATISFIED WITH PROGRESS SO FAR IN IMPLEMENTING POLITICAL REFORMS AND WHETHER EVENTS IN PORTUGAL HAD RESULTED IN REFORM PROGRAM IN SPAIN BEING STEPPED UP OR SLOWED DOWN. ARIAS REPLIED THAT POLITICAL REFORMS INTENDED TO ALLOW ALL SPANIARDS EXCEPT COMMUNISTS, TO PARTICIPATE WITHOUT REGARD TO POLITICAL PREFERENCE OR IDEOLOGY. PROGRAM HAS SHOWN NOTABLE RESULTS IN SHORT TIME, AS SPANISH RECOGNIZE THAT POLITICAL ATMOSPHERE DURING PAST YEAR DIFFERS CONSIDERABLY FROM THAT OF PREVIOUS YEARS. ARIAS ADDED THAT THE PORTUGUESE SITUATION HAS NOT AND WILL NOT INFLUENCE SPANISH PROBLEMS BECAUSE OF VERY DIFFERENT CIRCUMSTANCES IN 2 COUNTRIES. SPANISH POLITICAL LIFE, EVEN IN EXCEPTIONAL PERIODS, MARKED BY GREATER LIBERTIES THAN NEXT DOOR. SPAIN ALSO HAS BETTER RECORD OF ECONOMIC GROWTH AND DISTRIBUTION OF WEALTH AND ITS ARMED FORCES HAVE NOT KNOWN STRAIN AND BLOOD-SHED OF COLONIAL WAR. ARIAS CONCLUDED THAT SPANISH ARMY HAS LEARNED DANGER OF COMMUNISM FROM CIVIL WAR EXPERIENCE AND IS FULLY UNITED IN SUPPORT OF CONSTITUTION. ARMY'S ONLY ROLE IS TO BE WATCHDOG OF THAT CONSTITUTION, ARIAS NOTED.

7. SEN WILLIAM SCOTT EXPRESSED HOPE THAT US AND SPAIN WOULD CONTINUE TO HANG TOGETHER IN CONFRONTING COMMUNIST THREAT AND THAT SPAIN WOULD HAVE ORDERLY CHAGEOVER AFTER FRANCO. ARIAS RESPONDED BY RECALLING HIS 1974 VISIT TO USS FORRESTAL, WHICH HE SAW AS TYPIFYING US CONTRIBUTION AS GUARDIAN OF PEACE. BECAUSE OF THIS EFFORT, US HAS PERFECT RIGHT TO ASK COOPERATION OF ITS FRIENDS IN TASKS THAT IT BEARS. HE ASSURED SEN SCOTT THAT SPAIN IS SECOND TO NO NATION IN FIRMNESS OF DEFENSE OF ITS INDEPENDENCE OR IN ZEAL WITH WHICH IT WOULD RESIST COMMUNIST AGGRESSION.

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8. ARIAS ACKNOWLEDGED THAT BECAUSE OF FRANCO'S ADVANCED AGE EACH DAY BRINGS CLOSER TRANSITION TO JUAN CARLOS. FRANCO HAS SHOWN HIS CONCERN FOR CONTINUITY WITH ORDER AND SECURITY BY PROMULGATING DETAILED LAWS FOR SUCCESSION WHICH FORECLOSE ANY OCCASION FOR DISORDERS. BAAUSE OF HIS EXPERIENCE AS MINISTER OF INTERIOR, ARIAS ALSO CONFIDENT THAT THE TRANSITION WOULD IN NO WAY CHANGE SPAIN'S POLICIES AND THAT IT WOULD TAKE PLACE IN ABSOLUTE NORMALITY.

9. RESPONDING TO SEN HUGH SCOTT'S QUESTION WHETHER POLITICAL ASSOCIATIONS COULD EVOLVE INTO MULTI-PARTY SYSTEM, ARIAS REITERATED THAT ASSOCIATION OPEN TO ALL EXCEPT THOSE THAT VIOLATE THE CONSTITUTION AND THOSE WHO EXCLUDDFTHEMSELVES BY PRACTICING VIOLENCE.

10. IN CLOSING COMMENT, ARIAS EXPRESSED HOPE THAT FUTURE SPANISH POLITICAL LIFE, WHILE IDEOLOGIES MAY DIFFER, WILL BE CONDUCTED ON SAME LINES AS US POLITICS, WHERE THERE IS RESPECT FOR LAW AND INSTITUTIONS. MEETING CONCLUDED AFTER ABOUT 1 HOUR.

11. ON DEPARTURE, PRIME MIN PRIVATELY EXPRESSED HIS APPRECIATION TO AMB FOR OPPORTUNITY TO MEET WITH THE SENATOR.
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